

## THE WORK OF CONFERENCE

J. L. GILLIN

Some good brother who reads the title of this article will say, "Humph! I didn't know that we were going to the conference to *work*. Thought a conference was a place to see old friends and to take a vacation." Such a mental soliloquy is easily imaginable. And there lies one difficulty, and that reveals one reason of several embarrassing facts about a conference.

The brother who holds such a view of the case will not go unless he can spare the time for a vacation or wants to see friends which he knows will be there. And in either case he would better stay at home so far as real value to the purposes for which conferences are held.

Social converse and friendly association are some of the blessed features of the National Conference, to be sure, but they are not primary purposes in the great counsels of heaven. I would be the last to belittle the lasting and beneficial results of the friendly meetings of our brethren, but if that is the main purpose God's *work* will not be done. And while God's work is done better for friendships and renewed acquaintance between brethren and sisters, it must be observed that such a friendship has for its end not selfish personal gratification, but the glory of God.

Hence, it is that some of our best brethren will stay at home because they have no time to spare from their business or pastorate for either a vacation or the renewal of personal acquaintance, and fail to see that, if the welfare of God's kingdom depends on our conference in sufficient measure to justify its being held, that they ought to be there to assist in the doing of its work. If it is to do God's work, they according to their ability ought to see that it is done and they should help to do it.

Now what is the work which God expects and desires us to do at our next General Conference? I give my opinion.

Four different but related lines of work should receive the attention of our next conference. They are (1) missions, (2) the Christian life, (3) methods of church work, (4) study of the Bible. There should not be much resolving, but brotherly discussion and conference. The needs and methods of home mission work should be brought before the people at conference.

The agitation of Christ's last and great commandment should be kept up, until not only a few leaders but all the people at conference be aflame with love for the lost heathen world. The dark places of our cities should be brought to our attention until by thought and prayer we should be led to see how badly the whole world needs the gospel and it alone, pure, simple and powerful to cleanse and purify its plague spots of sin.

Under the head of the Christian life should be discussed and taught the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, Christ's Second Coming, the meaning of our ordinances and their relation to the Christian life, education, both minis-

terial and lay, its need and purpose, the social side of Christian life, i. e., our relations to each other and to all men, our decent attitude on the temperance question and allied themes.

Methods of church work should receive not a little attention. On the day set apart for church statistics we expect to have a discussion of church methods.

Some people are concerned very greatly about uniformity of practice among our widely scattered churches. While the question is scarcely relevant in my mind, yet we shall only approach uniformity by one of two methods, force or intelligent assent to teaching. And of the two the Brethren church is by historic precedents and by the Bible committed to the latter. Under this head the King's Children will be discussed, the Sunday school and its methods, the S. S. C. E., and a parliament on general church methods should find place, if possible for some little time.

And lastly, the Bible should be studied and taught. A period each day should be given for the exposition of texts, teaching of the Bible on important subjects and Bible readings. Of course we must again have those seasons of prayer on the hillside and in the tabernacle to prepare us for the work.

I believe if we carry out the program as briefly outlined above, we shall all go home, tired with our work, but freighted with blessings of heart culture, new ideas, resolves of a more consecrated service and more fit to do God's will in our little corner of God's great world.

Brethren, let us allow rancor and scheming to have no place. But asking wisdom and love of God let us in the bonds of brotherly love in this coming conference, *work for God*. O, why should we not rise to the realization of what a mission God has sent us on? Who has the creed to build upon such as we? How the world needs the gospel alone! Shall we not put off all enmity, malice, wrath and be clothed with love and faith and zeal and patience to do our little work? I pray God that it may be so. Come, all ye brethren and sisters who love our Lord Jesus Christ, and our common faith scattered all over our beautiful states and enjoy the week at Winona Lake *working for God*.

## OUR GREAT NEEDS

J. L. KIMMEL

As our National Conference is rapidly approaching the thought comes to us, what are our great needs as a church? What are the most important needs for this conference to consider?

It must be apparent to all that our needs are great, that our wants are many, but divers opinions may be entertained as to what are the most important things to come before this conference for consideration.

One of the first great needs of this holy convocation in my opinion is concentration. We are not large enough yet to divide our forces and in unity alone there is strength. If we could thoroughly unite all our forces

and concentrate our efforts in whatever we undertake to do the result would be simply astounding.

Practical church work should in my opinion receive more attention. The day of small things has not yet passed by and if we do not give them attention now we will be sorry later.

Perhaps one of the greatest needs of the church now is a first class educational institution. Ashland College is free from debt, thank God, but we need more than a beautiful location and fine buildings; we need a school in the true sense of the term, and we can have it too. We have the professors, we have the students and we have the means and I believe we have the grit and the grace.

May this conference distinguish itself by inaugurating such an educational movement that will give to the Brethren church a school that will be an honor to God and a blessing to mankind.

The finite mind cannot form any approximate conception of the momentous power and the far reaching influences of such a school.

We need no efforts for personal aggrandizement, no pettifoggery or hobby riding. We don't even need to know who shall be the greatest, we shall find that out later.

But we need faith, hope and charity. We need above all, the help of God, the presence of Christ and the guiding and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit and then we shall have indeed a glorious conference.

## WHY WE EXIST AS A CHURCH

V. M. REICHARD

The editor asks for discussions of important phases of conference work. There are a few basic principles which need restating so continuously as to become a part of our very organization. Repeated insistence upon them in all kindness and firmness is the one thing needful it seems to me. First, we need to fix clearly in mind the reason for our existence as an organization. To me we have no excuse for attempting to preserve a distinct and separate organization when we lose sight of or tamper with the rights of the individual conscience. The difference between us and the German Baptist Brethren is not one of degree but of kind. It is radical and fundamental. With them all rights are reserved to the organization and the individual loses his identity becoming part of whole which he may modify or not as he has more or less inherent personal force. With us all rights center in the individual. He recognizes nothing as a mediator between himself and the triune God. The church has no saving power in itself as it has no authority in itself and he is brought into direct contact with divinity without the intervention of pope, priest or preacher.

This, to me, is the highest privilege of the individual conscience. This is indeed religious liberty. This alone gives the individual the chance to live up to his own *creed*, his "*I believe*." Freed as he is from all spiritual fetters he can grow according to the "nurture and admonition of the Lord," in